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Police Planned to Kill Panthers in 3 Raids, Lawyer Says

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Black Panther attorney Leo Branton Jr. charged at a preliminary hearing Thursday that police raided three Panther headquarters "as an excuse to . . . wipe out the people" inside.

Eighteen suspects were arrested after a four-hour gun fight with police Dec. 8 and have been accused of conspiracy to murder 6 police officers.

Branton made his charge as he cross-examined Sgt. Raymond Callahan, who signed the affidavit for the search warrants.

When Dep. Dist. Atty. Ronald H. Carroll objected to a line of questioning, Branton told Municipal Judge James Harvey Brown:

"I intend to prove that this warrant was not sought in good faith. It was sought as an excuse to go in there and wipe out the people."

Several Weapons Stolen

He challenged a portion of the affidavit that stated one of the defendants, George Young, an ex-marine, went AWOL from Camp Pendleton shortly after several weapons were stolen.

During cross-examination, Branton brought out that the Police Department knew Young was in the stockade at the time of the theft.

"You know he could not have stolen the weapons . . . you were attempting to willfully mislead the court into thinking he had those rifles," Branton said to Callahan.

The sergeant denied the charge.

A machine gun similar to the six M-60 machine guns stolen from Camp Pendleton reportedly was seen at the Central Ave. building. Thirty M-14 rifles were also stolen from the military base.

Branton also questioned the police procedure in the arrest of Elmer Pratt, alleged head of the Panthers in Los Angeles.

An arrest warrant was issued for Pratt three days before the raids on a charge of assaulting a police officer, after he allegedly pointed a shotgun at a police car as it passed the Central Ave. headquarters.

Please Turn to Page 31, Col. 8

PANTHER

Continued from Third Page

This warrant was one of the reasons for the raids, according to police testimony.

Pratt, who was under surveillance, was observed on several occasions after the warrant was issued but no attempt was made to arrest him until the raids were made, testimony disclosed.

It also was brought out in cross-examination that federal agents were involved in planning the raid and that the Police Department has an informer in the Black Panther Party.

A tape recording recovered at the Central Ave. headquarters and played in court Thursday disclosed that the Panthers were expecting a raid by police.

The Panthers apparently made recordings of all conversations on their telephone. A tape of one conversation quoted Pratt as telling a caller that the police "are planning on moving in on our office anytime now. We're just sitting and waiting."

Another officer testified that 917 spent rounds and 4,230 rounds of live ammunition were found in the building.